

## EDITORIAL

In this issue John Rimmer discusses recent criticism of Jenny Randles for her apparently equivocal attitude to the questions raised by UFO abduction stories. However, those who wish to take a hard line on ufologists who assure abductees that their experiences are real, instead of attempting to help them to see that they have no more physical reality than dreams or nightmares, should perhaps choose a different target. Jenny may at times appear to be sitting on the fence, but there is nothing ambiguous about the following statement about abduction reports by another well-known British ufologist:

'Although, as we have seen, there are a variety of theories in circulation concerning the precise nature of this phenomenon, I believe there to be an extraterrestrial explanation. My own research and investigation coupled with careful analysis of the work of others leads me to the conclusion that a literal interpretation of the reports from witnesses is the correct one.'

This is by Nick Pope in his book *The Uninvited*. He is still involved in the abductee business; a recent email circulated to ufologists announces that he will be speaking at an Intruders Foundation conference in New York on 6 May. Pope, who is billed in the email as 'Higher Minister of British Defence (MOD)', will be holding forth alongside such luminaries as Dr John Mack, Dr Bruce Maccabee and Budd Hopkins. There will be a panel of abductees who will 'field questions from speakers and audience'. Those who deplore the activities of ufologists who exploit vulnerable persons who imagine that they might have been abducted by aliens should keep a close watch on his activities in this field.

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## THE TROUBLED SMALL WORLD OF BRITISH UFOLOGY

John Rimmer

The small world of British ufology has been wracked over the past few months by a succession of controversies, starting with the breakup of BUFORA when a number of active researchers, tired of the bureaucratic practices of the national organisation, set up the research-focused group UFOIN. Almost immediately UFOIN underwent its own crisis. Larry O'Hara, a political researcher with a record of exposing far-right and neo-Nazi activists, denounced the Lancashire-based ufologist Tim Matthews as the former Tim Hepple, who has a chequered record of activity in a variety of extremist political organisations ranging from the extreme-right British National Party to the Green Anarchist movement.

O'Hara's booklet on Matthews, *At War With the Universe* (a play on the title of a pamphlet Hepple/Matthews wrote: *At War With Society*) explains the complexities of this in great detail. Probably too much detail if you are not a keen student of the Byzantine complexities of the British political fringe. The pamphlet was sent to a number of figures in the British UFO establishment, and an extended review of it, by Peter Rogerson, appears in the latest issue of *Magonia* magazine (No. 70). One of O'Hara's main concerns was that Matthews's preferred UFO theory - secret weapons - was based on a promotion of alleged advanced technology developed during the Second World War by Nazi scientists.

At first, most ufologists who received the pamphlet seemed ready to close ranks around Matthews, defending the honour of British ufology against troublesome outsiders. However, after a careful reading of O'Hara's pamphlet (carefully ignoring the distracting personal abuse - constant references to 'the thug Matthews', etc., and entertaining side issues such as claims that O'Hara had

attacked Matthews's parents' coal-shed for unspecified reasons) a few doubts began to creep in about Matthew/Heppe's suitability as a member of the UFOIN team. Any unpleasant necessity to refuse Matthews membership of UFOIN was dispelled when, counter-Groucho-style, he declined to be a member of any group that didn't want him, and resigned before he was elected. He then announced the formation of his own group, the grandiosely-named 'National UFO Research Association' (Peter Rogerson informs me that there are certain legal restrictions on organisations arbitrarily calling themselves 'National' or 'British', but we'll let that pass). Little has subsequently been heard except an announcement that its members will have no role in deciding its policy or electing its leaders. You may well think this policy is in some way related to Matthews's earlier political experience, but I could not possibly comment. However, this pattern of joining organisations, attempting to disrupt them then setting up new groups is a pattern which O'Hara claims is typical of Matthews's *modus operandi*.

No sooner had friend Matthews disappeared into apparent oblivion (though I suspect only temporarily) than another problem arose. Kevin McClure is one of Britain's most respected researchers and writers on ufology and related topics. He has edited a series of magazines and bulletins over the years, most recently *Abduction Watch* which is archived on the *Magonia* web site. These have been distinguished by a strong moral and campaigning stance; he has always been concerned about the effects which misguided and uninformed 'investigation' may have on individuals who are caught up in such events as abductions. He has never been afraid to make strong personal criticisms of people who he feels may be harming vulnerable individuals.

Most recently he has criticised Tony Dodd over his handling of a supposed abduction case involving a young boy in Kent. His article 'Bogeymen' in *Magonia* 55 is a strongly worded attack on particular researchers who he feels have exploited the accounts of children's experiences.

The most recent issue of *Abduction Watch* goes further, and calls for the abandonment of all abduction investigations by responsible ufologists. Now this in itself is not a particularly controversial suggestion amongst the more responsible British ufologists, and in Internet correspondence UFOIN members have been discussing just such an idea themselves. Indeed they have recently debated the idea of publishing a report to the media and other researchers advocating this and explaining the reasons why they think this should happen.

Kevin has now issued a further document, an 'Open Letter' to Jenny Randles, which he has circulated to a dozen or so researchers. In this he seizes upon some comments made by Jenny Randles in her recent book, *The Complete Book of Aliens and Abductions*. I intend to review this book in the next issue of *Magonia*, so will not go into too much detail about it here, except to say that I find it generally a good book, giving a balanced view of the abduction phenomenon. Kevin, however, seems concerned by two points: he feels that Jenny fails to give an unambiguous endorsement to the idea that no human has ever been abducted by physically real space aliens; and that she gives precise numbers for abduction cases which have been reported in Britain and the USA - specifically, 87 abductions in Britain. Now I don't think that there is anywhere in the book that Jenny says, in so many words, 'no humans have ever been abducted by space aliens', but I think it would be a rather perverse reading of the book which would give anybody the idea that she did not think that. Similarly in the numbers game, her reference is always to 'abduction cases' or 'abduction reports': it is stretching things to suggest that this means she endorses the physical reality of the 87 reports she counts. Perhaps she should have prefaced her book with the paragraph that I attached to my *Evidence for Alien Abductions*: 'Any serious scientific report of a UFO investigation is riddled with a great number of absolutely necessary words like "alleged", "supposed", "apparent" and "reportedly". Ufology deals with the testimony of individuals, and such caution is vital; we can assume nothing. However, they do tend to get in the way of a smooth flowing narrative, and by and large I have omitted them when summarising cases. They should however be assumed in all descriptions of "alleged" sightings'. An elegant little disclaimer which I offer free of charge to all UFO authors.

I think here Kevin is being deliberately disingenuous; however, his other point is valid. He suggests that as Jenny has identified 87 cases in Britain as being 'best evidence' for some sort of phenomenon, these would be worthy of re-investigation. He asks Jenny to release information about these cases for that purpose, including the names, ages and sexes of the percipients, location, date, time, details of investigator and investigation, and so forth. Immediately this presents a contradiction when we consider that much of this information has been offered to the investigators on terms of total confidence, and Kevin is someone who has been most critical of investigators who have released witnesses' personal details. However, assuming that some agreement could be reached about confidentiality for the individuals involved, I think that a careful re-investigation of many of these cases would be of considerable value. They are already, to some extent, in the public domain; the people

involved will already have been exposed to the ufological milieu, and in many cases will have had experience in dealing with investigators. I think it would be inadvisable - as well as impractical - to re-investigate all of the 87 cases, but I am sure there are some which would definitely repay careful reconsideration. Rather than dismiss Kevin's 'Open Letter' out of hand, I think British ufologists should carefully re-read it and consider it as a contribution towards a new understanding of the abduction phenomenon. I think all responsible ufologists in this country now agree that we should call a halt to the investigation of new abduction cases. But for some considerable time to come people are still going to come forward claiming such experiences; we should have something to tell them which will help them make sense of their experience. A re-investigation project may provide information towards this.

Finally, to demonstrate that there really is very little difference between Jenny Randles's and Kevin McClure's approaches to 'abductees', I give you a paragraph from *The Complete Book of Aliens and Abductions* which I think Kevin, and all serious researchers will endorse:

'It is hard to accept that true memories of a terrible nature are being unleashed into the mind by hypnotic regression. And of course if they are then what right do the ufologists have to inflict such torture upon adults (let alone children)? A ufologist will wring out the facts, give lectures, write a book and move on to the next case. The witness is left to face a lifetime of torment.'

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## LITERARY CRITICISM

### Reviews by Peter Rogerson

**Danny Sullivan. *Ley Lines: A Comprehensive Guide to Alignments*, Piatkus, 1999. £16.99.**

In the first part of his book, Danny Sullivan, the editor of the *Ley Hunter*, provides a fascinating history of the ley hunting movement from the days of Alfred Watkins onwards. He portrays Watkins as very much the practical man, rather than the mystic portrayed in some quarters, seeing the leys as ancient merchants' ways, rather like the roads he drove down in the course of business. Sullivan notes how more mystically inclined people were attracted to the Straight Track Club. It was these people who reformed ley hunting as part of the counter culture in the 1960s. Sullivan notes the role of Aimé Michel's theory of orthoteny in the rebirth, and the founding influence of people like Tony Duncan Wedd, Jimmy Goddard and Philip Hesselton in this. I still remember Wedd's lecture to the notorious DIGAP Manchester conference of 1968, with his Pythonesque slide shows: 'No. 2, The Scots Pine. THE SCOTS PINE', and his assertion to teenagers like myself in the audience, that when we grew up we would live in a world powered by earth energies and other goodies from the space people. Still waiting, Tony.

Other pioneers included John Michell, a pioneer of 'flying saucers and fairies', ancient astronauts and general earth mysteries, whose book *The View over Atlantis* Sullivan describes as seminal. Alas I never inhaled the sort of substances necessary to appreciate that sort of thing, and described it in my *MUFOB* review as 'unmitigated rubbish' and suggested that it might give aid and comfort to the sort of people in whose company Tim Hepple used to be seen.

Ley hunting has certainly toned down rather since then, and it's quiet clear that these early mystical effusions are now seen as rather an embarrassment. Ley hunting is now trying to get back to something of the more down-to-earth quality of Watkins, and to try and mend fences with the archaeological establishment, which itself has undergone drastic changes since Watkins's days, when Egyptian diffusion was very much the thing. Today there is a general willingness to see Neolithic societies as much more sophisticated, though I doubt that the particular views of Hawkins and Thom even now find much favour.

While I liked the history, I was rather less sure of the modern interpretation, which is Paul Devereux's theory of 'spirit lines'. It's not that I am in any way sure that it is wrong, far from it, it's that I am not sure it really is established. The real problem I had, which was no doubt caused by the popular format of the book, was the repeated assertion that such and such is a tradition here and there, without any documentation to back it up. I think we have to be very wary of such claims, because to put it frankly, much folklore was collected by amateur antiquarians, local clergymen and their daughters, and in more recent times by Women's Institutes and WEA classes. Very worthy, no doubt, but lacking modern anthropological, archaeological and historical scholarship, often based on very outdated ideas, and open to multiple levels of bias. There is also a suspicion that much 'age old



folklore' was actually invented between the Restoration and the end of the 19th century.

I am not sure that 'spirit lines' actually play much role in traditional ghost lore; the average British ghost is reluctant enough to move from the 'haunted room', still less from the council house or pub in which it is safely ensconced, to go walkies, in straight lines or any other way. More seriously I'm not sure whether Sullivan actually believes in 'real' spirits moving in straight lines, or is indeed dealing with traditions. He makes the curious remark that as there is no reason for the world-wide belief in straight spirit flight other than ' . . . real human experience, possibly from witnessing the passage of spirits, either in waking reality, in dreams or in . . . subconscious experience . . . ' Well, an obvious rational reason why such a belief may have arisen, is that light, such as in moonbeams and sunbeams, travels along straight lines, and the idea of spirits travelling along them to celestial realms seems a fairly obvious one to me.

Despite any cavils this is a good popular introduction for newcomers who want to know about the history and current beliefs of ley hunters.

**Dana Redfield. *Summoned: Encounters with Alien Intelligence*, Hampton Roads Books, 1999. £14.99**

Dana Redfield is not only a writer and abductee, but also a 'silent contactee' and channeler, some of whose channelled writings are reproduced in this book. These are barely coherent, but show many of the classical features of hypergraphia and automatic writing, including the use of ponderous and pompous phraseology, quite unlike her normal writing style. She also includes a diary of dreams and unusual nocturnal experiences, which are quite clearly hypnogogic and hypnopompic experiences, with the occasional sleep paralysis episode thrown in. The admittedly brief and incomplete account of her life, with six brief marriages etc., seems to hint at some underlying problem in her life, but I doubt if it has anything to do with abduction by aliens. It is much more likely that these experiences are symptoms rather than causes. There are also aspects of her claimed childhood experiences which, with a different set of preconditions and therapists, could have been spun into a child abuse narrative.

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## LETTER

Your remarks about 'British ufology born yet again?' are to the point. I suspect that the purpose of NUFORA is twofold: 1. To have a last desperate attempt at making ufology acceptable to mainstream science, and 2. To cock a snook at, and maybe cause confusion in the public mind with, BUFORA (else why the very similar name?).

With regard to the first, NUFORA promises 'objective research' and 'the highest standards of investigation' with all investigators being required to undergo formal training plus an examination to qualify. Certain books from a prescribed list are essential reading for all would-be investigators.

Objectivity and high standards are old hat of course. But never before have I heard of ufologists being required to sit examinations! What will we have next? A-levels or maybe even honours degrees in ufology? And just who are these 'examiners'? What qualifications do these people possess at present and who appoints them? It will be most interesting to see the NUFORA book list (what about videos?) and a specimen examination paper.

The announcement of a team of 'consultants' (no actual names yet) is only to be expected. One wonders just how much consulting these people will in fact do. Shades of NICAP, CUFOS, MUFON, FSR and so on.

I share your views about NUFORA's meaning, purpose and life expectancy.  
**Christopher Allan, Stoke-on-Trent**

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**Next issue: Martin Kottmeyer on spacesuited aliens in 'Diving to Earth'**

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